

but I would be remiss if I did not single out Beth for her especially meritorious contributions to my office over the past decade.

Beth began her work in my office as counsel, providing excellent advice on myriad constitutional and civil rights issues, among other things. One of her most noteworthy accomplishments from this time related to the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, located not far from Burlington, IA. The history of the covert nuclear weapons program at the IAAP is a fascinating one that I could recount for hours. Suffice it to say that for decades the men and women of the Iowa Ammunition Plant worked on a secret nuclear weapons program, handling highly radioactive materials with protective gear of only cotton gloves—gloves that were intended to protect the weapons material from contact with humans, not to protect humans from contact with dangerous radioactive materials.

After my office helped to uncover the long history of dangerous working conditions at the IAAP, we still had to address the needs of hundreds of men and women who were exposed to radioactive materials and to try and help them receive compensation and health care to deal with the high rates of cancer and respiratory disease associated with their work. For years we struggled with various Federal agencies. We tried to seek a legislative fix. We sought an administrative remedy. It was finally under Beth's leadership that the men and women of the IAAP were designated a special exposure cohort, which made them eligible for compensation and medical care to account for medical expenses and lost wages. It is not an exaggeration to say that, but for Beth's efforts, the former workers of the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant might still be waiting on the Federal Government to appropriately compensate them for their service to our nation.

So much did I value Beth's work that when she decided that she wanted to take a step back and spend more time with her kids, I convinced her not to leave the payroll entirely but to stay on to work on special projects. In that capacity, Beth played a critical role in one of my proudest achievements, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008. This law was written in response to several Supreme Court decisions narrowing the definition of disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act. These narrow interpretations led to the denial of the ADA's protections for many individuals that Congress intended to protect under the ADA. The ADAAA made a number of changes to restore the intent of the ADA and to ensure that its protections were broadly available to persons with disabilities. Though the ADAAA passed the Senate by unanimous consent, a fact that is a credit to the Senate, one should not take from this the idea that it was easy. It required long negotiations and difficult

choices involving Congress, the administration, disability rights organizations, and business interests. Beth played a critical role in these negotiations, deftly managing both the politics and the policy. The result of her steady guiding hand is abundantly clear today: the ADA, as amended by the ADAAA, continues its impact as one of the landmark civil rights laws of the 20th century, the Emancipation Proclamation for Persons with Disabilities.

When I became chair of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, one of my first acts was to establish an investigative unit to provide critical oversight and investigations work. There was no question in my mind that Beth, with her relentlessness, eye for detail, and penchant for sifting through detritus to reveal the truth, was the person for the job. As my chief investigative counsel, she has delivered time and again, for example, uncovering labor abuses by government contractors that led to a White House Executive order clamping down on such abuses. Beth also played a key role in producing HELP Committee reports on the abusive use of seclusions and restraints in our Nation's schools, on barriers that stand in the way of the economic security of persons with disabilities, and on the rapid growth of e-cigarettes and their marketing.

Most noteworthy was Beth's leadership of the HELP Committee's investigation of abuses in the for-profit sector of higher education. This investigation spanned several years and culminated in the release of a multi-volume report detailing in remarkable detail the abuses by some for-profit colleges—in particular, their misuse of taxpayer funds, their poor educational outcomes, and the need for greater Federal oversight of these schools. This investigation was monumental both in its scale and in its level of detail. Beth oversaw every aspect of this very delicate investigation, which resulted in much greater scrutiny of the for-profit industry and which also put the investigations arm of the HELP Committee on the map.

About a year ago, I asked Beth to return to my personal office to serve as legislative director. In that capacity, she has done yeoman's work managing the legislative staff, helping in the unenviable job of closing our Senate office, and continuing to provide the excellent counsel that had made her indispensable for the past decade. And she has done all of this while continuing in her role as chief investigations counsel for the HELP Committee.

Mr. President, when I was growing up, my parents didn't talk politics. We didn't know politicians. But we knew this: When my family hit rock bottom in the late years of the Depression, with my father out of work and with no way to provide for his family, the government gave us a hand up. Dad got a postcard in the mail notifying him to

report for employment with the Work Projects Administration, the WPA. Dad always said that Franklin Roosevelt gave him a job. That opportunity gave my father dignity and enough money to put food on the table, and, maybe most important of all, it gave him hope.

As a proud Midwestern progressive, I have fought to give opportunity and hope to those who truly need it and deserve it, including working families seeking affordable health care and childcare, family farmers struggling to stay on the land, young people paying for college, and seniors seeking financial security in their retirement years.

But I haven't done it alone. Every Senator stands on the foundation of his or her staff, and on my staff Beth Stein has been a rock-solid cornerstone in that foundation. For her counsel, intelligence, and excellent work, and for helping me to be the best servant I can be to the people of Iowa and the United States, for working alongside me to do our best to give people hope, I extend my deepest gratitude to my counselor and friend Beth Stein.

TRIBUTE TO MILDRED OTERO

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President. As a boy growing up in rural Cumming, IA, population 150, I could never have imagined that I would one day serve in Congress. My father had a sixth-grade education. He spent most of his life working in coal mines, and all he had to show for it was a case of black lung disease. My mother was an immigrant, raising six kids in our little two-bedroom house. My parents did not talk politics. We did not know politicians. But we knew this: When my family hit rock bottom in the late years of the Depression, with my father out of work and with no way to provide for his family, the government gave us a hand up. Dad got a postcard in the mail, notifying him to report for employment with the Work Projects Administration, the WPA. Dad always said that Franklin Roosevelt gave him a job. That opportunity gave my father dignity, and enough money to put food on the table. Maybe most important of all, it gave him hope.

As a proud Midwestern progressive, my career has been guided by a desire to give hope to those who truly need it and deserve it, to provide a ladder of opportunity to working families seeking affordable health care and childcare, family farmers struggling to stay on the land, and seniors seeking financial security in their retirement years. There is no rung on the ladder of opportunity more important than education, from rich early learning experiences, to college, and beyond.

As I have endeavored to give people hope and to provide them with a ladder of opportunity, I have not done it alone. I have been blessed to have one of the most capable staffs on Capitol Hill. I rise today to extend a personal thanks to one of the best, my chief

education counsel, Mildred Otero, who has stood stalwartly alongside me in my efforts to secure for every American a quality education from cradle to career.

Mildred came to Washington in 2003 as a Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Public Policy Fellow, working for then-Senator Hillary Clinton. Over the years, she has also worked at the Children's Defense Fund, for Senator JACK REED, and at the Department of State. Before joining the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, Mildred served as Senior Policy Officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, helping to lead its Federal advocacy efforts for U.S. programs.

When she arrived at the HELP Committee, she brought with her sterling credentials, unmatched knowledge of education policy, and a reputation as a tough but fair negotiator. Most importantly, she brought with her a commitment to children and a determination to confront the savage inequalities in America's public education system, and these priorities have been the foundation of all the work that she does. For Mildred, "leave no child behind" is not a slogan, it is an imperative, an obligation that motivates her every day to strive to do what is best for the children of our country, especially those who are born into disadvantage.

Mildred's commitment to our children and her determination to extend a hand up to the disadvantaged have borne fruit in significant accomplishments since she joined the HELP Committee.

Foremost among these accomplishments was passage last summer of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, a bill to update and strengthen our Nation's job training programs. Frankly, to call enactment of this bill an accomplishment is a huge understatement. This is a bill that had been stalled for years due to one disagreement after another, each seemingly as intractable as the next. But for Mildred, what others see as an intractable disagreement is just another challenge to work through with creativity and diplomacy. Work through them she did, one after another, until all that was left was final passage of the bill. It is testament to Mildred's determination, creativity, and skill that the final bill passed by a vote of 95-3. As a result of her work on this bill, millions of Americans will be able to upgrade their skills, obtain better jobs, and ultimately, better their lives and the economic security of their families.

Mildred and her team also successfully guided into the law improvements to the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which allocates more than \$5 billion annually and supports more than 1.5 million children across the country. The last reauthorization of this program took place 18 years ago, at a time when child care was principally seen as a work-support activity and only incidentally as something that could have a positive impact

on the development of children. Today, backed up by impressive scientific research, we know that this program can and should be much more. In addition to providing vital work support for parents, it should be a rich early-learning opportunity for children. These are exactly the kinds of improvements that Mildred shepherded into law. Among other things, the bill requires States to improve education and training requirements, strengthens licensing requirements, and stipulates that States must demonstrate how they are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children, especially children with disabilities.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention Mildred's effort in the K-12 and higher education spaces. Last summer, the HELP Committee, under Mildred's guidance, passed the Strengthening America's Schools Act of 2013. This bill, an update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, provided a framework to ensure that all children graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and their careers. With Mildred's guidance, the Strengthening America's Schools Act focused greater attention on early childhood, encouraged equity through fair distribution of resources, and maintained a laser focus on helping all children, but especially disadvantaged children, to succeed in school.

Mildred brought similar energy to her efforts this year on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, efforts that culminated with the introduction of the Higher Education Affordability Act. For generations, a college education has been the pathway to the middle class, but new challenges are threatening that promise for many families in Iowa and across the country. College affordability, skyrocketing student debt, transparency—these are high stakes issues for students and families. The Higher Education Affordability Act seeks changes to our system of higher education in order to make college more affordable and accessible, and to restore and strengthen the ladder of opportunity—a ladder that has been growing weaker and that is in need of repair.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said that "life's most urgent and persistent question is: what are you doing for others?" During her tenure as a senior counselor on the HELP Committee, Mildred has answered that question in powerful ways, and in particular through her tireless efforts to bring greater equity to public education at all levels. We respect her expertise, and we admire the strong moral voice that she has brought to the Committee. I am deeply grateful to Mildred for her superb leadership of the Committee's Education Office, and I wish her the very best in her future endeavors.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DON HOUSE

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I wish to honor Don House, who will retire as the Walnut Ridge Mayor after 4 years of public service to the citizens of the community.

Mayor House constantly stressed the spirit of cooperation within and between each city department, and the importance of good work ethic among its employees. That is why when he began his service as mayor he met with all of the community's employees.

Don led a reorganization of the police department in an effort to serve the needs of the community more responsibly, including a crackdown on drug dealers and drug manufacturers within the city. Don also oversaw the completion of the Northeast Arkansas Water Authority project, improving the water quality in Walnut Ridge.

In addition to serving as mayor, Don lived in Lawrence County most of his life, owned House-Gregg Funeral Home—a local funeral home and family business, and held office in the Arkansas State House of Representatives.

I applaud Don for his outstanding achievements and success as city mayor. My staff and I have enjoyed working with Mayor House on the projects important to Walnut Ridge. I am truly appreciative of his dedication, leadership, and eagerness to serve Arkansas. •

RECOGNIZING THE IDAHO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation's 75th year as an organization.

The Idaho Farm Bureau, which was started in 1939 in Murtaugh as an organization of farm and ranch families, has represented the interests of Idaho producers in addressing agriculture and natural resources issues. The organization is focused on "formulating action to achieve educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement and thereby, to promote the national well-being."

Idaho is home to more than 25,000 farms and ranches. Farm families support our communities and are central to our economy and our State's culture. The pressures on these hard-working producers meeting the food needs of a growing world population are increasing as the pressures on our natural resources increase. Consideration of how policy changes affect this bedrock is critical to long-term economic growth and the success of our State and Nation.

From providing input on the farm bill, to transportation legislation and Federal regulation affecting the farm and ranch community, including Endangered Species Act concerns, the Idaho Farm Bureau has helped ensure that Idaho producers' voice is heard in a broad array of local and Federal policy discussions. I have greatly valued